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SPECIAL ANALYSIS

POLAND: A Party in Disarray

The long-delayed session of the party's Central Committee that begins today appears primarily intended to demonstrate that the party is still a vital force. The party has made scant progress, however, toward resolving internal differences and reasserting its leading role. The session may provide indications of the strengths of the moderate and hardline factions in the leadership, but the primacy of party chief Jaruzelski and the military will not be seriously affected. In any event, the party still faces a lengthy rebuilding process.

The need to impose martial law and to erect the first military government in Communist history was a severe indictment of the Polish leadership and testimony to the bankruptcy of the party. During the party's decay over the 18 months before martial law, about 250,000 members turned in their cards and a similar number were expelled or suspended; this has reduced membership by about one-sixth.

The disintegration of the party created sharp divisions between moderates and conservatives, even though there was general agreement that martial law was necessary, that the party would have to be reestablished as the leading political force, and that a strong state apparatus would have to be created.

Conservative Strength

Martial law vindicated the conservatives, who had consistently advocated firm measures, and they are now seeking to reshape the party in their image. When the military steps aside, they want to take over and to reject any significant reforms.

Although the hardliners are few in number, they are disproportionately strong in the party apparatus and the security services. Consequently, they are able to exert influence through intimidation.

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inability to rule by itself ensure that the martial law regime will remain in place--perhaps for a year or more--while the party is rebuilt. The hostility of many military officers toward civilians increases the chances of a thorough housecleaning.

The Military Council is in a strong position to perpetuate its authority to make decisions and to determine the shape of the reborn party. In addition, a general heads the Central Committee's cadre department, and reserve officers reportedly are being placed in local party positions.

The Soviet View

Moscow frequently has used hardliners in the party to put pressure on Polish leaders for firmer policies. Use of this tactic has been limited, however, by the need to avoid weakening the party further by aggravating factionalism.

Although the Soviets are urging purges and other measures to restore party cohesiveness, they realize that the process will be long and that the time is not ripe to return to civilian rule or to place a conservative at the helm. So long as Jaruzelski appears able to maintain order and pursues policies generally in line with Soviet wishes, Moscow probably will continue to accept him as the best choice over the near term. It will not hesitate, however, to use its conservative assets to influence him to maintain a hard line.

Outlook

If the conservatives ultimately prevail, the party will become even more isolated from society. It will be a smaller organization that will rely solely on fear and coercion to maintain control. This inherently unstable situation would provoke a new round of resistance, including attacks against party and police personnel.

The only hope for the party to move eventually toward an accommodation with the Polish people may be for an outsider such as Jaruzelski to retain the party leadership. Jaruzelski, however, has neither shown serious interest in remolding the party nor demonstrated the required political skills.

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The conservative side is led by former Politburo member Grabski--ousted last year after leading an attack against former party chief Kania--and Albin Siwak, an outspoken Politburo member opposed to Solidarity. Politburo member Olszowski, who wants to become party leader, may have hurt his cause by appearing to stay on the sidelines.

A recent document suggests that at the meeting the conservatives will renounce the policy of dialogue, demand a purge of those who supported reforms, and call for reduced ties with the West. They also want a smaller, tighter party structure that can exert unchallenged control over the party and the country.

The hardliners almost certainly regard Jaruzelski as a temporary leader. They need the Army but will seek to subordinate it to their control. Although they cannot attack Jaruzelski directly, they may try to isolate him from such moderate advisers as Deputy Premier Rakowski and Politburo member Barcikowski.

The moderates, in contrast, are weak and on the defensive. Even before martial law they were ambivalent about the reforms demanded by Solidarity and the party rank and file. Rakowski probably represents them when he argues that the new party must not restore the autocratic, unresponsive style that was a major cause of the country's numerous crises.

At the local level, the moderates seem to be the main victims of purges. Their position probably would erode further with any new unrest that leads to greater repression.

In the meantime, the pragmatic Jaruzelski offers the moderates their best hope for continued influence because he appears committed to a course of some eventual political accommodation. His support for reform of the bureaucracy, with emphasis on technical competence, puts him on the side of the moderates on a key issue.

Military Retains Control

The continued party infighting solidifies Jaruzelski's position and encourages the military's appetite for power. The need to maintain control and the party's

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